

June 2009 Plenary Session

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Economic Recovery Act Very difficult for evaluators. Obama said recently \$ aren't being spent quickly enough. The first goal is to track waste, fraud and abuse, and Tracking how well \$ are being spent. is not the highest priority.

Introductions.

How are we going to handle ERA as Evaluators?

AG: Thank you. Evaluation is critical. AAAS fellow, working with science tech and public policy. Energy consumption and CO2 emissions. I concentrate on energy so it is fitting to be here \$17 b to raise jobs and reduce emissions. At EERE \$5 b is spent on Weatherization program. An opportunity to understand strategic implications of the programs. 1) Resource Availability maps. Published by DOE on website. Maps only 1/2 of EERE mission. 2) is it possible to address regional differences in consumption? Not just availability.

DM: Thanks. My personal opinions, not dept. April 3, OMB memo. Updated guidance for AARA. Funds spent transparently We hope Evaluation is in "other purposes" part of memo' I believe evaluation is central to AARA. Suggestions of how to measure goals, in great detail. Ask my colleagues for Good examples of programs set up for evaluation. Diesel Emission reduction program. EPA workplan to plan lifetime reductions of CO2 eq, NOx, particulates. EPA longstanding methods of monetizing health impacts on air emissions. So not as challenging as ERA might be. Others are Renewable Fuels standards, CAFÉ,

AARA

This program already existed in 2005 and required evaluation. This distinction is important. There may already be evaluation criteria to inform the program. Another distinction between programs in Rulemaking vs. Regulation. There are longstanding requirements evaluation if regulations

PD: 1 yr ago I was testifying about stimulus funds. Last year \$50 B now \$878 bill Program is targeted, temporary. We are looking at other goals like env. policy. Contributions to env eff where evaluation can play a role. GAO's role is focused on state spending. We RAT board do Bi-monthly report, April, 2nd report in July. We have built in data gathering, where are risks, is it ramping up. Weatherization from \$50 m to \$2 billion. Making it a new program.

AARA has tremendous flexibility. How decisions are made is critical and evaluation will be critical.

What works, what hasn't worked. ?

What is definition of success. Fiscal, Environment category?

- 1) Investment . Micro investment
- 2) Research and Development – DOE has a lot of money

Value in information that's already out there. What evaluations do we currently have that can give answers to AARA.

Information on AARA can inform Congressional debate on Energy Bill and Climate change bill.

Is it going to be a temporary impact or permanent?

MH: Mark Shaffer talked this morning about plans developed by each state and territory for Endangered species. Plans were required by congress. Represented State vision of protecting species. Comprehensive planning not done by many states, so these plans were historic. Identified 10,000 species. Plans identified in 30 states the landscapes that needed conserving. A paradigm shift for state wildlife dept.s usually they only do species that are hunted and fished. 15% of funding is directed at 90% species not hunted and fished. Resources are limited. A little over \$5,000 for each species. Could spend 10 times that to monitor species, so we have to take a habitat approach.

How does this tie to Econ Stimulus. We see it tied to \$3 billion in State comprehensive plans if we can make the needed links. Opportunity to use these moneys in Econ. Stimulus. These plans – biggest limitation is that several years ago, climate change was not a part of these plans. We are helping states to update these plans to incorporate climate change. This should make them more in line with administrations focus on climate change.

KN: I'm going to be preaching to the choir. What you already know. What we're up against; Less positive points: evidence based practice and policy is key. What works? Intended impacts in line with goals. When is evidence good enough? 2) era of super transparency. 3) eval has been used in a retrospective way rather than prospective and learning 4) Burn out, fatigue, compliance burden due to GPRA and PART not supporting a learning culture 5) eval capacity has not kept paced with needs. Looking at the room it looks like EPA has plenty of capacity for evaluation. But this is a selective sample in this room 6) What's going on in the states? They are having monetary problems. Who collects the data? Yeah, the people who are being layed off. Yeah, they want to listen to you. 7) Time to perform. It varies. What if they are complex? Doesn't matter – 3 months. 8) Accountability is the watchword. But is not the best attitude to take if you are going to learn from evaluation.

Evaluation changes over time are like baseball – T-ball, Now little league, but now Major league fastest pitcher will be throwing fast balls at us.

Katherine Dawes group: Logic models are a step forward.

Keep your eye on learning. What's working in conservation and what's working under evaluation. We've passed the command and control imperative. How do we press on and keep our eye on learning. We should call evaluation offices "learning offices."

GG: My questions to panel. We've moved from billions to trillions. All this money all at once. 2 or 3 questions all at once 1) what are the doors you can open, beyond waste fraud and abuse. Get that money out there, they've built in protections against waste. But didn't put a word in on evaluation. Measure of program is "how many jobs did they create?" Where's the room for evaluation? 2) How can the people running these programs be glad you are there? They say, "leave me alone" let me spend the money and get it out and not waste it. How can evaluators be helpful and not an irritant?

AG: Pam's comments. 2 types of investment. Inv spending is not as rigid as it appears. Yes weatherization is strict, but only for \$5 b out of \$67 b. we have another \$30 b that can be use We expect 2000 applications with 11 different categories inc. "other" category.

Strategic goals are identified along with goals of recovery act. Diff between long terms and short term jobs have been identified, beyond that how much electricity will be reduced and can calculate CO2 savings. Each application will look at energy saved and CO2 reduced. We are starting off using evaluation of strategic goals for applicants.

How to get people glad we are there. People believe in the goal, so that's easy. They want to be part of process and get it done right. Problem of making sure when we've done enough work.

DM if it's a grant not many restrictions on how funds used. I'm from OMB so I haven't figured out how to make people glad I'm here.

We are set up with statutory offices and budget offices. Subject matter expertise on both budget and regulatory side. We believe evaluation is the core of our mission. We want our programs to be effective. Under exec order we ask for a cost benefit analysis, and it tries to quantify env. benefits.

Diesel program already has existing standards. Retrofit is just accelerating it. Green standards will depend on size of funding.

GG: How much flexibility do you have at GAO, That you will attribute accountability beyond the law.

KN: that's always been our focus. Do you have a plan to evaluate this weatherization program at state level? It has to be built in at front end of program. They are Designing programs in a short amount of time. What works / doesn't work is incredibly valuable to know as programs are being written.

MH: Action plans – congressional mandate for states to complete evaluations and money is based on completed evaluations, but this requirement is not currently part of AARA.

KN: evaluators need to be more creative to turn the current press for accountability into learning and gaining knowledge.

Question: Real problem of learning about what works is the paperwork reduction act. OMB oversees this act. How can we evaluate any of this stuff about what works without a change in the paperwork reduction act?

KN: someone always brings that question up.

DM: It is the PWR Act so it requires two comment periods. And other rules.

PD: we don't have to go through PWRA, but RA requires data collection, so reporting is required, so we need to build it into requirements.

Q2 : Can the PWRAct be evaluated in terms of which parts are effective and which are not?

GG: Don't need permission to make a logic model. First rule leave them alone for six to nine months. Once it gets going, even using small numbers, focus groups, you can ask people what's going wrong/right? How did you solve that problem? In formal feedback.

PD: we aren't doing compliance type work. It is chaotic out there.

GG: We are out of time. It's 5 minutes after. We can continue discussion out on the patio.